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A CAUTION AGAINST FALSE PROPHETS:

ADDRESSED TO

The INHABITANTS of KINAWLY, in the DIOCESE of KILMORE.

BY

THE REV. JAMES CREIGHTON.

TO THE LAW AND TO THE TESTIMONY; IF THEY SPEAK NOT ACCORDING TO THIS WORD, IT IS BECAUSE THERE IS NO LIGHT IN THEM. ISA. viii. 20

PROVE ALL THINGS; HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD. I THESS. V. 21

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1791

TO THE

READER.

THE following Discourse having been written chiefly for the Use of a plain People, it was necessary to adapt the Phraseology of it to the Comprehension of such. If it tends in any wise to instruct the Ignorant, or confirm the Wavering; to establish and settle them in the Truth, lest they should be *tossed to and fro*, and *carried about with every Wind of Doctrine*; or, if it serves to exhibit the *Wolf* in his proper Colours, so that the Flock being timely apprized of their Danger, may fly from him, and avoid him as their greatest Enemy; it will answer the End which the Author had in View, and will be a sufficient Apology for his making it Public.

A CAUTION AGAINST FALSE PROPHETS.

Beware of false Prophets, which come to you in Sheep's Clothing, but inwardly they are ravening Wolves. Ye shall know them by their Fruits.

Matt. vii. 15, 16.

1. THE Creator of the Universe being utterly incomprehensible by any of his Creatures, even the highest Arch-Angel; and his Will also being known only so far as he himself is pleased to impart it to them; he hath graciously condescended to reveal the Knowledge of himself in Part, and also the Knowledge of his Will, not only to those *ministring Spirits* who wait on him continually to execute his Commands; but also to many of the Children of Men in every Age, whom he employs as Means of conveying it to others. And he caused his Will to be promulged not only by the Mouth of those Men, whom he employed on this Occasion; but ordered it also to be written for the Learning and Instruction of all who should follow after in every succeeding Age.

2. Sometimes these Men are styled *Prophets*, sometimes *Apostles*, sometimes *Teachers*, sometimes *Ambassadors for Christ*, sometimes *Ministers of Christ*, and *Stewards of*

the Mysteries of God. There is a two-fold Signification in which the Term *Prophet* is taken in Holy Scripture. *First*, this Title is given to One, who being enlightened by him who knoweth all Things past, present, and to come, is enabled to foretel future Events, or what shall happen to particular Persons, Families, Nations, or Kingdoms in succeeding Times. *Secondly*, it is given to One, who speaks in the Name of God, who teaches, expounds, or interprets the Word of God to others; in which Sense it is most commonly used in the New Testament; and to this particular Notion I mean to confine the Term in the following Discourse.

3. It hath been the Business of the grand Deceiver, ever since he was cast out of the Realms of Bliss, to endeavour to counteract the gracious Designs of Providence. In order the more effectually to frustrate the Work of God, who willeth all men to be saved, he sometimes puts on the Appearance of an *Angel of Light*; sometimes he *sows Tares among the Wheat*; and sometimes he sends his Emissaries, his *Ministers*, his *false Apostles*, his *deceitful Workers*, who *transform themselves into*, or rather put on the Appearance of *the Apostles of Christ*. As Satan had Numbers of these Agents dispersed, not only among the Heathen Nations, but also among the Jews of old, in order to draw them to Idolatry; so has he many now, in the Times of the Gospel, who, like an *ignis fatuus*, lead Men astray, saying, *Lo! Christ is here, and Lo! he is there*; who, tho' they have undertaken *to be Teachers of the Law*, and also to preach Christ, yet *understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.* I would not be understood to assert, that *all* those alluded to, do knowingly and willingly lead Men astray; but as Sin hath blinded their Eyes that they cannot see, they are made instrumental by Satan in deceiving or leading their Fellow-Mortals astray; for, if *the Blind lead the Blind*, the inevitable Consequence is, that *both* he that leads, and he that is led, *will fall into the Ditch.*

4. It is undoubtedly necessary, *highly* necessary, for those who speak in the Name of God, to know assuredly

edly that they are ſent and commiſſioned by him; for he denounces judgments againſt thoſe who *ran*, though he *had not ſent them*; who *propheſied*, though he *had not ſpoken to them*. However, I ſhall leave this Point to be conſidered ſeriouſly by the Prophets, and proceed to my Purpoſe; which is, to endeavour to point out to *you*, who come under the Denomination of Hearers, ſome Marks or Tokens, whereby you may diſtinguiſh falſe Prophets from the true Ones. And this I do out of ſincere Affection and Regard for *your* Souls; fearing leſt *after my Departure, grievous Wolves* ſhould *enter in among you, not ſparing*, neither *feeding the Flock*. Another Reaſon is, becauſe many of you ſeem deſirous to have an Anſwer to this Queſtion,—" We are told that falſe Prophets ſhall ariſe, and deceive many; how then ſhall we know or diſtinguiſh them?"

5. It would, indeed, have been inconſiſtent with the Wiſdom of our Divine Lord to caution his Diſciples and Hearers againſt falſe Prophets or falſe Teachers; and not at the ſame Time lay down ſome Rule whereby they ſhould be known, or point out ſome Teſt or Standard whereby they ſhould be tried. In vain would it have been alſo for his Apoſtles to forewarn the Chriſtians that falſe Prophets ſhould ariſe in after-Times, unleſs they had alſo told them ſome Marks or Tokens whereby to diſtinguiſh them. There are many of thoſe Marks to be found in the Writings of the Apoſtles; but the Criterion, or diſtinguiſhing one, mentioned here by our bleſſed Lord in the latter Part of the Text, ſeems to be the plaineſt and moſt eaſy imaginable: *Ye ſhall know them by their Fruits*. Here is an infallible Token, whereby the meaneſt Mechanic, the moſt illiterate Herds-man, People of the weakeſt Capacity, may be able to judge for themſelves. It is eaſy to diſcern whether a Tree is good or bad by examining the Fruit it bears; for, as our Lord obſerves elſewhere, *every Tree is known by his own Fruit*; and here in the Context he ſaith, *every good Tree bringeth forth good Fruit: but a corrupt Tree bringeth forth evil Fruit. Wherefore by their Fruits ye ſhall know them.*

6. Here the false Prophets, or some of their Adherents may be ready to object to this Mode of Procedure, of "judging men," as they term it; and will ground their Objection on the Words of our Lord in the beginning of this Chapter:—*Judge not, that ye be not judged.* These Words are frequently in their Mouths, and they quote them as they do many other Passages of Scripture, without considering the Context, the Scope or Tendency of the Discourse or Passage to which they belong. Our Lord, indeed, forbids here the passing a rash Censure upon others, lest we provoke God to use Severity towards us; but that he allows of our forming a Judgment or Opinion, and prying into the Lives and Actions of others, when we have amended and reformed our own, appears from those Words of his at the 5th Verse, *then shalt thou see clearly to cast the Mote out of thy Brother's Eye.* How then could he *see the Mote*, that is, the lesser Crimes of which his Neighbour was guilty, unless he was allowed to discern, to judge, and examine his Life and Actions? Again, when he says, *ye shall know the Tree by its Fruits;* or, *every Tree is known by its own Fruits:* does he not evidently allow us to examine the Fruits, and then to give our Opinion, declare our Judgment, or, if you please, pass Sentence accordingly? If this be not allowed, we make Jesus Christ, the all-wise God, to contradict himself twice in this Chapter.

Although then we are not to pass an hasty, rash Censure upon any Man; yet, we must be allowed to form a Judgment or Opinion, not only of Prophets, but of *every* Man, according to this plain, easy, candid way of judging; namely, judging of the *Tree by its Fruits.*

I. First then let us examine the Fruits of the Prophets with respect to their own Lives and Actions; that is, examine them as *Men*, before we consider them as Persons commissioned by God to declare his Will to others.

II. Let us examine the Fruits or Effects of their Preaching or Ministry on their Hearers; And,

III. Let

III. Let us closely attend to their Doctrines, and compare them with the written Word of God. Let us bring them *to the Law and to the Testimony*, as to the true Test and Standard by which every Teacher and his Doctrine should be tried.

I. 1. What are the Fruits apparent in their Lives? Do they live "a godly, righteous, and sober Life?" Do they frame their Lives according to the Tenor of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, of which the Text makes a Part? Are they meek, humble, lowly, patient under Sufferings; resigned to the Dispensations of Providence; endeavouring to be daily more and more conformed to the Image of their Lord? Are they *Patterns of good Works?* Are they *Patterns to the Believers in Word, in Conversation, in Love, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity?* Are they *temperate in all Things?* Do they *give themselves wholly to Reading, to Exhortation, to Doctrine?* Does it appear that they have the *Glory of God* in View in all their Thoughts, Words, and Actions? Do they seem willing to *spend, and be spent* for the Children of God, endeavouring, as much as in them lies, to help them on in the Road of Salvation? Do they reprove or exhort the Wicked, instruct the Ignorant, and seem desirous that all should come to *the Knowledge of the Truth?*—Where these Fruits appear, ye may conclude that the Tree is good.

2. On the contrary, are they, upon impartial Observation, found to have the following Marks? Are they *proud, heady, high-minded, Boasters, covetous, greedy of Gain, or filthy Lucre?* Are they *Strikers, Brawlers*, or *soon angry;* are they *given to Wine or strong Drink?* Do they *tarry long at Wine?* Are they *Blasphemers?* Do they swear in common Conversation? Are they *disobedient to Parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural Affection, Truce-breakers, false Accusers, Incontinent, Adulterers, Fornicators, unclean Persons, Sodomites, lascivious* and obscene, *fierce, Despisers of those that are good, Lovers of Pleasures more than Lovers of God?* The Persons, in whom all, or any of these Marks are found, are so far from being the true Prophets of the Lord, that they are

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not real Christians. They are not the *Ministers of Jesus Christ*, neither did he send them as *Ambassadors* in his *stead* to *beseech* others to *be reconciled* to God. Therefore beware of all such; they are false Prophets.

3. How do they spend their Time? Is it in *sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber?* Is it in Idleness, Sloth, Inactivity, in useless or trifling Amusements, in what is usually termed by them,—"doing no harm;"—being negatively good? Do they spend their Time at Play-Houses, Gaming-Houses, or Drinking-Houses? At luxurious Entertainments, at Drums, Balls, or Assemblies; at Cards, Dice, or Tables; at Horse-Races, Cock-Matches, Hunts, Sports, and Places of public Diversion? If ye find that they spend their Time thus, ye may, without passing any rash Censure, conclude they are false Prophets, and that God never sent such to speak in his Name: For, the true Minister of Christ spends his Time after the Example of his Lord, in *going about doing* good, in endeavouring to save the Souls of Men; or, like St. *Paul*, in teaching not only *publicly*, but also from House to House; in visiting not only the sick, but also those who are in health; and following the said Apostle's Advice to *Timothy*, he gives himself *wholly to Reading*, to *Exhortation*, and to *Doctrine*. He has "always imprinted on his Mind the great Treasure "committed to his Charge, namely, the Sheep of "Christ, which he bought with his Death, and for "whom he shed his Blood. He knows the Greatness of "the Fault, and the horrible Punishment that will en-"sue, in case any Member of Christ's Body shall take "hurt or hindrance by reason of his Negligence. And "considering the End of his Ministry he *never ceases* "his Labour, his Care and Diligence, but *does all that* "*in him lieth* to bring all such as are, or shall be com-"mitted to his Charge, unto that Agreement in the "Faith and Knowledge of God; and to that Ripeness "and Perfectness of Age in Christ, that there may be "*no Place left* for Error in Religion, or Viciousness of "Life.

"Also

" Also considering how studious he ought to be in " reading and learning the Scriptures, he *forsakes* and " *sets aside* (as much as may be) *all worldly Cares and* " *Studies.* He weighs well and ponders these Things, " and determines, by God's Grace, to give himself " *wholly* to this Office; and *as much as lieth in him*, ap- " plies himself *wholly* to this *one Thing*, and draws *all* " his *Cares* and *Studies* this way." See the Ordination Service of the Church of England.

If then he does *all that in him lies*, to bring those who are committed to his Charge, to an Agreement in the Faith and Knowledge of God, so that *no Place* is left for Error in Religion or Viciousness of Life: If he gives himself *wholly* to this *one Thing*, and draws *all his Cares* and *Studies* this way: it is evident he will have *no* Time to throw away at Sports and idle Diversions.

4. With Respect to their Conversation, ye may examine whether it is *Holy*, and such *as becometh the Gospel.* Whether it turns chiefly upon Topics that tend to Edification? Whether it be chiefly of *Heaven* and heavenly Things? Whether it savours of the Language of *Canaan*, or is expressive of the Felicity of the New *Jerusalem*, the proper Home, the Country of a Christian? Whether it appears by their Conversation, that they have the vital Principle of Religion in the Heart, which is ready upon all Occasions, both *in Season*, and *out of Season*, to burst forth at the Lips, because *out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh?* I would not, however, be understood to insinuate, that a Minister of Christ is not at *any* Time to speak of temporal Affairs, and Matters which concern Individuals and the Public in general; for, *then must he needs go out of the World.* And altho' St. *Paul* said, *his Conversation was in Heaven;* yet as he followed his Trade, there can be no doubt but he often conversed not only with those of *like Occupation*, but also with many others, concerning their temporal Affairs. But I would only point out this as another Mark, whereby ye may distinguish false Prophets from the true ones; by observing whether their Conversation has *chiefly* a godly Tendency, or whether

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it turns mostly upon those idle Amusements, Sports, and Diversions already specified. If it is *chiefly* of the latter they speak, then ye may look upon them as false Prophets; they are not the Ministers of Jesus Christ.

Thus far ye may be able, even the most illiterate amongst you, to judge of these Men by their Fruits, in their own Lives, Actions, and Conversation. However, remember always that ye are not to judge rashly or precipitately; but candidly, impartially, and deliberately.

II. 1. Ye may enquire into, or judge of their Mission, by observing the Fruits or Effects of their Preaching or Ministry on their Hearers. The Commission, not only of St. *Paul*, but of every true Apostle and Minister of Christ, runs in these Words, or Words to the same Purport: I *now send thee to open Men's Eyes; to turn them from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God, that they may receive Forgiveness of Sins and an Inheritance among them that are sanctified, by Faith which is in me.* Acts xxvi. 17, 18.

2. When God delivers this Commission to any Man, though he may not deliver it by an outward Voice, as he did to *Paul*; yet he adds a Seal or Seals to it; he ratifies and confirms his Word: he makes him instrumental in *turning* Men *from the Power of Satan unto God.* It is God alone that can open the eyes of Men. It is the Power of the Almighty that can *turn* them *from* spiritual *Darkness*, wherein they are involved, to the Light of divine Knowledge and Holiness; and *from the Power*, the Bondage and Thraldom *of Satan*, (who held them in Sin, Guilt, and Misery) to the Love, and happy Liberty of the Children of *God.* It is he also that can and *does* grant a Pardon or *Remission of past Sins, and an Inheritance among them that are sanctified.* But still he does or effects all this by Means, by the Instrumentality of *Paul*, or any other Man whom he pleases to commission or employ in this Work. The not *turning Men* then *from the Power of Satan unto God*, is one grand Mark of false Prophets. By their Fruit, in this respect especially, shall ye know or distinguish them.

3. For,

3. For, though they ſhould even ſpeak Truth, they may be falſe Prophets; they may come under the Denomination of thoſe Prophets of whom God complains by the Prophet *Jeremiah: Behold I am againſt the Prophets, ſaith the Lord, that ſteal my Words every one from his Neighbour; yet I ſent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they ſhall not profit this People at all, ſaith the Lord. If they had ſtood in my Counſel, and had cauſed my People to hear my Words, then they ſhould have turned them from their evil Way, and from the Evil of their doings. But they ſtrengthen the Hands of evil Doers, that none doth return from his Wickedneſs.* Jerem. Chap. xxiii.

Or they may come under the Denomination of thoſe, who ſhall ſay to Chriſt in the great Day, *Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy Name, and in thy Name done many wonderful Works?* To whom he will anſwer, *I know you not,* I never acknowledged you as my Meſſengers; *depart from me, ye Workers of Iniquity.*

4. The ſpeaking the Truth then, or a Part of the Truth, is not *always* an evident Sign of a true Prophet; for, the moſt wicked Man on Earth may read a Chapter in the Bible, which is undoubtedly good and true; or he may *borrow from his Neighbour,* he may extract or tranſcribe an excellent Diſcourſe from ſome ſpiritual Divine; yea, he may deliver it well, with an audible, clear, articulate Voice; and yet it may have no Effect upon the Hearers; it may not be ſent Home to their Hearts by the Spirit of God; it may not be applied by that divine, energetic Power, which alone is able to ſubdue the flinty, ſtubborn Heart of Man. But the Word of that Man, who is commiſſioned by God to ſpeak in his Name, is ſent with Power to the Hearer's Heart, and is a Means of awakening, convincing, or converting, at leaſt ſome of thoſe who hear. I ſay, *ſome* of thoſe, for *all* that heard Chriſt, or his Apoſtles in the firſt Age of Chriſtianity were not converted; but ſtill there are *ſome* awakened, convinced, or converted by the Inſtrumentality of thoſe Men who are ſent by God.—If then ye do not ſee this Effect wrought, (perhaps indeed it may not be wrought *immediately*) ye may

may look upon the Speaker, or Speakers, even though they ſhould ſpeak the Truth, to be falſe Prophets; therefore *beware* of them, leſt they ſhould deceive you by a plauſible outſide Appearance, or by ſometimes mingling Truth with Falſehood.

5. Here, perhaps, ſome may be deſirous to have thoſe Terms *awakened*, *convinced*, and *converted*, defined; that they may have clear Ideas of what they import, and then be the more capable of judging of the Effects intended by them. I have often endeavoured to explain them to *you*, to whom this Diſcourſe is addreſſed; and I ſhall now attempt it once more, in order to rivet it on your Minds, and alſo for the Satisfaction of others who may be in the like Circumſtances with you.—*Firſt*, then, Man in a State of Nature is ſtupid, indolent, and ſecure; inſenſible of his Condition, and involved in gloomy Darkneſs. He may have Eyes very quick in diſcerning the Things of Time and Senſe; but that Eye which diſcerneth Spiritual Things is quite cloſed up. He is ruſhing head-long upon a Precipice, where, if he falls, he falls into eternal Perdition. His ſoul is in a dead, lethargic State, ſleeping on the Brink of the Pit, out of which there is no return.—Though he *hath Eyes*, yet he *ſees not* ſpiritual Things; and tho' he *hath Ears*, yet, like the *deaf Adder*, he *hears not*, or will not hear *the Voice of the Charmer, charm he never ſo wiſely*. When this Man comes by ſome Means to be made ſenſible of his Condition, to be rouſed from his Lethargy, ſo that he ſees the Danger and avoids it, he ſtarts from the Precipice, and *flies from the Wrath to come*, crying out, *what ſhall I do to be ſaved?* He is then ſaid to be *awakened*.

Secondly, a Man is ſaid to be *convinced* of Sin, when he is not only convinced that he *has ſinned*, that he has actually tranſgreſſed the righteous Law of God, and that perhaps thouſands of Times; but he is convinced that he *has Sin*; that, which is properly called Sin, as being the Source and Fountain, from which all actual Sins flow; which is thus defined by our Church.—" It is the Fault, Infection, or Corruption of the Nature of every Man, that naturally is engendered of the Offſpring of *Adam*,

Adam, whereby Man is very far gone from original Righteousness, and is of his own Nature inclined to Evil." He feels himself "tied and bound with the Chain of Sin," and yet cannot loose himself. He feels that "Burden which is intolerable," and yet cannot remove it. He finds that "there is no Health in him," that from *the Sole of the Foot, even unto the Head, there is no Soundness in him, but Wounds and Bruises, and putrifying Sores.* He feels the *Plague of his own Heart*, and sees that it is *desperately wicked*, and that *every Imagination of the Thoughts of his Heart is only Evil continually.* He feels himself altogether sick; sees the absolute Necessity there is for a Physician, and therefore he seeks and enquires earnestly for him. He sees himself in a lost Condition, just ready to sink to the nethermost Hell, and therefore he cries aloud to him who alone can deliver, saying, "*save, Lord, or I perish.*"

Thirdly, by *Conversion* I do not mean being converted from one particular Church, Sect, or Party, to another; nor even from erroneous Notions, Doctrines or Principles, to the Orthodox Faith, or right Opinion; (though this doubtless is highly necessary;) but the being *turned from Darkness to Light*, from Sinfulness to Holiness, or from the *Power of Satan to* the living *God.* The *carnal, sensual, devilish* Mind, which was at *Enmity with God*, is now changed into the meek, patient, humble *Mind, which was in Christ.* Where the noxious Weeds of Envy, Anger, Hatred, Malice, Lust, Revenge, Uncleanness, and such like, grew spontaneously before; there is now Purity, Temperance, and Heavenly-mindedness. *Conversion* is not merely an outward Reformation in Life and Manners; it is a total inward Change or Creation of the Heart: for, saith St. *Paul, if any Man be in Christ, there is a new Creation;* (καινη κτισις) *old Things are done away, all Things are become new.*

The true Prophets of the Lord are made in some-wise instrumental in this Conversion or Change of Heart in their Hearers; therefore, where ye do not perceive this Effect wrought in *some* of the Hearers after some Time, ye may conclude that they who prophesy, preach,

or expound, are false Prophets. Be not deceived then by the outward Appearance. Though they should *come to you in Sheep's Clothing*, with a mild, harmless Appearance, yet they may be *Wolves inwardly*. They may not be converted themselves, and cannot be instrumental in converting others. Ye are not, however, to reject them for their mild, affable, or courteous Address; for, *Gentleness*, *Meekness* and *good Behaviour* are some of the Characteristics of a true Minister of Christ given by St. *Paul*; only do not trust *merely* to these, but look for something farther, namely, the Fruits which I have already pointed out to you. If these Fruits do not appear, it matters not in what Garb or *Clothing* they come; whether it be an *Amice* or an *Alb*; a *Hood* or a *Cowl*; whether it be in *Purple*, *Scarlet*, or *fine Linen*; whether it be a *Gown* and *Cassock*, a *Surplice*, or *Lawn Sleeves*; it matters not whether they wear a *Cap*, a *Coif*, a *Mitre*, or a *triple Crown*; they are false Prophets, therefore *beware* of them.

6. Having pointed out to you the Marks of a false Prophet, and also some of the Properties of a true Minister of Christ, I hope the weakest and most illiterate Person amongst you will be able to judge for himself, and to discern whether any Person, who speaks to you in the Name of God, is really sent and commissioned by him so to do, or not. For, by a close Attention to, and Examination of their *Fruits* with respect to their own Lives and Conversation, and also with regard to the Effects wrought in their Hearers, ye shall be able to distinguish whether the *Tree* is good or not, and therefore cannot be deceived.

This is the easiest Method, for illiterate Persons, to know or distinguish false Prophets from true ones; yet it may be fit to advert to their Doctrines also, and compare them with the written Word of God.

To speak particularly concerning each erroneous Doctrine that has been propagated in this and former Ages, would exceed the Limits of a Discourse of this Kind; therefore, I shall only point out a few Things, which

which may be useful to you whilst ye are attending to the Doctrines of professed Teachers, and may serve in some Measure to guard you against them.

III. 1. Examine what Tendency the Doctrines which ye hear, chiefly have: whether they point you to a broad, smooth Road, or to a narrow one. Our Lord tells us, in the Words immediately preceding the Text, that the Road *which leads to Destruction*, is a *broad* one; but that the *Way is narrow*, and the *Gate strait*, *which leads* to everlasting *Life*. Now, here is a plain, sure Rule to form your Judgment by. They, who teach Men to walk in a *broad* Way, a Way that the Multitude walk in, a Way that is easy, and pleasing to Flesh and Blood, a Way that is broader than that laid down by our Lord in his Sermon on the Mount, are undoubtedly false Prophets. The Way to Heaven, pointed out by our Lord, is certainly the true Way; namely, the Way of Lowliness or *Poverty* of *Spirit*; of holy *Mourning*; of Meekness, and holy Desire; *hungering* and *thirsting after Righteousness*; *Purity* of *Heart*; loving God, and our Neighbour; doing good according to our Power; *suffering Persecution for Righteousness sake*; going through *evil Report*, and *good Report*; *taking up* our *Cross daily*; *denying* ourselves; renouncing the Devil, the World, and the Flesh every Day, and bearing all Things patiently for Christ's Sake. This is the Way to Heaven; he, therefore, who teaches any other Way, or whose Doctrines have a Tendency to point you to any other Way than this, is assuredly a false Prophet.

2. It was the Characteristic of false Prophets of Old, to teach or *speak smooth Things*; that is, such Things as were pleasing and agreeable to the People, to the rich, the great, the noble, and the powerful. And because they did so, they were caressed and beloved by those to whom they prophesied. On the other Hand, they, who spoke the Truth, were hated, despised, rejected; often cast into Prison, and sometimes deprived of their Lives. There were *four hundred Prophets* who prophesied smooth Things to *Ahab*, and encouraged him to *go up to Ramoth-gilead to Battle*; but *Micaiah*, who declared the

 Truth,

Truth, and flattered him not, was *hated* by him, and *cast into Prison*, and ordered to be *fed* there *with Bread and Water*. When *John the Baptist* undauntedly reproved *Herod* for Adultery, he was cast into Prison, and afterwards *beheaded* by Order of the said King, to gratify a Woman, whose Rage was implacable, and could not be any otherwise glutted, than by the Blood of that *holy and just Man*; for such he appeared, even in the Eyes of Herod himself.

But are there not Prophets or Teachers at this Day, who *speak smooth Things?* who are afraid of offending the great, the rich, and powerful, by reproving them for their Wickedness, and telling them, that if they should persevere in it, they *shall be turned into Hell, with all the People who forget God?* Who are afraid to offend delicate Ears with such plain Terms as are contained in the written Word of God? Who chop, and mince, and refine that Word, avoiding all such Expressions as may sound harsh, or grating to their Patron's Ears; lest they should forfeit his Favour, or lose his Interest? But will not these very Men reproach such false Prophets hereafter in Words to this Effect, when they are both lifting up their Eyes in Hell Torments? "Thou didst not warn me, when I was going on in Sin careless and secure; thou didst not warn me to *fly from the Wrath* which I now feel; thou didst not exhort me to turn out of that broad and dangerous Way, which has at length brought me to this Place of Destruction, where I must lie consuming to everlasting Ages."

3. Another Characteristic of false Prophets was, that they *daubed with untempered* Morter, and *healed the Hurt of God's People slightly, and strengthened the Hands of Evil-doers; saying, Peace, Peace,* when there was *no Peace*. Against such God denounces Judgments by the Prophet *Ezekiel* in these Words: *Mine Hand shall be upon the Prophets that see Vanity, and divine Lies: because they have seduced my People, saying Peace, and there was no Peace; and one built up a Wall, and lo! others daubed it with untempered Morter; say unto them that daub it with untempered Morter, that it shall fall: I will accomplish my*

Wrath

Wrath upon the Wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered Morter, namely, the Prophets, who prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and see Visions of Peace for her, and there is no Peace, saith the Lord.

But are there not Prophets at this Day, who are *daubing with untempered Morter; healing the Wound of God's People slightly, saying, Peace, Peace, when there is no Peace?* If a Mourner in Zion, who is truly convinced and sensible of that deadly Wound, which he derives from fallen *Adam*, and is eagerly solicitous to have it healed; if such a one comes to some of our modern spiritual Physicians for Advice; as they are ignorant of the Nature of the Disorder, will they not very probably prescribe a wrong Remedy, or apply some Salve of their own Composition, in order to skin the Wound, not knowing that it is still festering within, and that, if not healed in due Time, it will at length end in a Mortification? To speak without Metaphor; are there not many, who have the Care of Souls committed to them, who will attempt to quiet a wounded Conscience immaturely; that is, before God has spoken Peace and Reconciliation to it? If a Person, who is in Bondage to Sin, sensible of his Burden and desirous to be eased of it, who is deeply convinced, not only of his own actual Transgressions, but of inbred Sin, that Corruption of Nature which he derives from fallen *Adam*, and also of his Inability to extricate himself from that fallen State: If such a one, I say, should come to many of our modern Prophets, will they not say he is Mad, or a Melancholy Fool? Will they not say he is in the Vapours, and therefore recommend it to him to take the fresh Air, to go into Company, that is, into such Company as are rushing down in the *broad Road that leadeth to Destruction?* Will they not recommend Cards, Plays, Balls, or Assemblies, and Places of public Diversion, telling him they "hope he is in a good Way, and will be soon well enough?" Thus, instead of pointing him to the *only* Remedy, the *universal* Medicine, which is for the *healing of the Nations*; instead of referring him to that *Fountain* which is *opened for* all *Sin* and *Uncleanness*; in a Word, instead of pointing him to Jesus Christ,

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they ſend him to the Devil for a Cure. Oh! will not God *viſit for theſe Things?* Will he not require the Blood of Thouſands at the Hand of ſuch Prophets as have *healed the Wound of his People ſlightly*, and had the Aſſurance to ſay there was *Peace*, when he himſelf had not ſaid ſo?—Beware then of all ſuch who attempt to heal your Wound in this Manner, for however ſoothing their Language may be, however oily and fluent their Tongue, yet *the Poiſon of Aſps is under their Lips;* they are at leaſt ignorant Prophets, they are not the Meſſengers or Miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt, neither will he own them at the Day of Judgment.

4. In Times of old, there were Prophets, who not only *daubed with untempered Morter*, but alſo built, or attempted to build upon a wrong Foundation; even ſo it is now. For, are there not at this Day, Teachers, who are laying a Foundation of Works as the only Ground of our Acceptance with God? Who talk largely of Moral Rectitude and the Nature of Things, the Dignity of human Nature, the Rewards of Virtue and heathen Honeſty, and think of climbing to Heaven by a Ladder compoſed of "good Nature, good Humour, Benevolence, Propriety, Decency," and ſuch like? Theſe, indeed, are building upon a ſandy Foundation; the whole Fabric, which they attempt to build thereon, will undoubtedly tumble, and they themſelves will periſh in the Ruins. Many of theſe, I know, will ſay they pretend to no Merit, no Righteouſneſs of their own, and that they *proteſt* againſt all thoſe Errors broached by the *Mother of Harlots;* yet they are gliding into one of the moſt pernicious and capital of her Errors, by maintaining the Doctrine of Works in Oppoſition to Faith.

Now, *other Foundation can* no Man lay, *than that which is* already *laid;* namely, Jeſus Chriſt. He is the eternal *Rock of Ages;* and whoever builds upon this Foundation, is a *wiſe Man*, and *a wiſe Maſter-builder*, as *Paul* was. The Superſtructure which is properly erected on this Foundation, will ſtand againſt every Blaſt, every Storm, every Tempeſt to which it may be expoſed,

ed. Nay, it will remain after the general Conflagration, and ſtand when Earth's Foundation ſhakes. Chriſt is the *Door*, the *Way*, the *Truth*, and the *Life*; no *Man* can *come to the Father, but by him.* Whoſoever *climbeth up*, or attempts to climb, by any *other Way, the ſame is a Thief, a Robber*, a falſe Teacher, and not a true *Shepherd.* Beware then of all ſuch Teachers, as point you to any other Door, or any other Way, than Chriſt Jeſus; and indeed, if they have not come in *by the Door* themſelves, they cannot know how to point *you* thither.

5. But there is another ſort of Teachers againſt whoſe Doctrines I muſt alſo beg Leave to guard you; who, through fear of running foul upon Works on the one Hand, are in danger of being ſwallowed up in the *Antinomian* Whirlpool on the other. They lay the true *Foundation*, indeed, with *Paul*, that *Maſter-builder*; but neglect to obſerve that Caution of his, let *every Man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.* For, *if any Man build on this Foundation, Wood, Hay, or Stubble*, any other Doctrines, except the ſubſtantial, vital Truths of Chriſtianity, *his Work ſhall be made manifeſt* at the great and final Day of the Lord. Theſe Men *conclude* very juſtly with *Paul, that a Man is juſtified*, in the Day of Converſion, *by Faith* only, *without the Deeds of Law*, of any Law whatſoever; *for, by the Deeds of the Law ſhall no Fleſh be juſtified in the ſight of God.* But they neglect to inſiſt, with the ſame Apoſtle, upon Works of Righteouſneſs or true Holineſs conſequent to Faith, and antecedent to final Salvation. They agree with Paul, where he ſays to *Titus*, not by Works *of Righteouſneſs which we have done, but according to his Mercy, he ſaved us, by the waſhing of Regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghoſt*; but they forget the Words of the ſame Apoſtle in that ſame Paſſage, where he exhorts *Titus*, to *affirm conſtantly, that they who have believed in God ſhould be careful to maintain good Works*; for as he ſaith in his Epiſtle to the *Hebrews, without Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee the Lord.* They ſeem to forget alſo what the Apoſtle *James* ſaith. *What doth it profit, my Brethren, though a Man ſay he hath Faith, and have not Works? As the Body without the Spirit is dead, ſo Faith without*

Works

Works is dead also. They seem also to forget those Words of our Lord in the last Chapter of the Revelations, where he saith, *behold I come quickly, to give every Man according as his Work shall be. Blessed are they that do his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the Gates into the City.*

The Line of Truth with respect to Faith and Works, which makes a manifest Distinction between Works antecedent to Faith, and those which are consequent upon it, is, I apprehend, clearly pointed out by our excellent Reformers in the Articles and Homilies of our Church; and yet I fear there are many professed Members of the Church of *England*, who are deviating either to the right Hand or to the left. "Works done before Justification," (saith our Church in her 13th Article) that is, "before the Grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God; nay, rather, they have the Nature of Sin:" therefore, "That we are justified by Faith only, is a most wholesome Doctrine and very full of Comfort." (as it is affirmed in the 11th Article.) But yet she insists upon Works consequent to Faith, and that in very plain Terms, least carnal Men should take Occasion to indulge their wicked Appetites. "That Faith," saith she, "which produceth either evil Works, or no good Works, is not a right, pure and lively Faith; but a dead, devilish, counterfeit, and feigned one. For, how can a Man have the true Faith, a sure Trust and Confidence in God, that by the Merits of Christ his Sins are forgiven him, and he reconciled to the Favour of God, when he lives an ungodly Life, and denieth Christ in his Deeds?" (See Hom. on Faith and Salvation.)

Beware then of all such Teachers as would draw you from this Line to either extreme. Beware of those who are attempting to raise a Superstructure of Christ's Religion on a Foundation of Works, or, who are ignorantly exhorting Men to work Righteousness, whilst they are still Unbelievers, whilst they are still in that State of Nature which they derive from fallen *Adam*. On the other Hand, beware of those, who preach Salvation by Faith,

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and extol Free-Grace; yet at the ſame Time, do not inſiſt on Works of Righteouſneſs or true Holineſs, as abſolutely, and indiſpenſably neceſſary, previous to final Juſtification in the great Day.

To you who are not yet juſtified, I ſay, *repent, and believe the Goſpel; believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved* from paſt Sins. To you, who *have* believed in the Lord Jeſus, with that *Faith that juſtifieth the ungodly*, I ſay, preſs forward, and never ceaſe until ye are ſanctified throughout, and *cleanſed from all Unrighteouſneſs*. God *is of purer Eyes than to behold Evil, and cannot look on Iniquity*; therefore, if ye expect to ſtand in his Preſence, or to ſee him *Face to Face as he is*, ye muſt be *all glorious within*, totally cleanſed from *all Filthineſs of Fleſh and Spirit*. Sail cloſely according to this Line; keep the Eye of Faith ſteadily fixed upon the Morning Star and Sun of Righteouſneſs; at the ſame Time putting good Works aboard, ſo ſhall ye outride the ſtormy Billows, and boiſterous Tempeſt; which ye may expect to meet with in this Sea of Troubles. So ſhall ye avoid every Shoal, and dangerous Quickſand; ſo ſhall ye arrive ſafely in Port, the Haven of everlaſting Reſt.

6. There are other Teachers, whoſe Doctrines are ſtill more dangerous, who ſap the very Foundation of Chriſtianity, *denying the Lord who bought them*, and have the Effrontery to broach their damnable Doctrines openly; who are reviving among us the dangerous Tenets of thoſe Arch-Heretics *Arius* and *Socinus*, picking out ſome of thoſe Paſſages of Scripture, which relate to Chriſt's Humanity *only*, and paſſing by many others where his Divinity is moſt clearly aſſerted. Hear what he himſelf ſaith to Philip, (John 14.) *If ye had known me, ye ſhould have known my Father alſo: Philip ſaith unto him, Lord, ſhew us the Father, and it ſufficeth us. Jeſus ſaith unto him, have I been ſo long Time with you, and yet haſt thou not known me, Philip? He that hath ſeen me, hath ſeen the Father: and how ſayeſt thou then, ſhew us the Father. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me.* And in another Place, he ſaith,

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I and the Father are one. (John 10 Ch. 30 v.) And again in the 17th Chapter, speaking of his Apostles, and those who should believe in all Ages through their Word, he saith,—*The Glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one.* Now, methinks, this alone is sufficient to confute *Arius, Sabellius,* and *Socinus;* since it proves both the Plurality of Persons, and the Unity of Nature in God. In a Word, *God was in Christ reconciling the World to himself,* and Christ was God; or, as St. *John* phrases it, *the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* "Equal to the Father as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood."

Against these false Teachers, St. John particularly cautions us, when he says, *believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits, whether they are of God, because many false Prophets are gone out into the World. Every Spirit which confesseth not Jesus Christ, who is come in the Flesh, is not of God: and this is that Spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now already it is in the World.* (1 John 4 Ch. 1, 3.) Of these also St. Peter makes mention in the second Chapter of his second Epistle; *As there were false Prophets among the People, so there will be false Teachers among you, who will bring in damnable Heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift Destruction: whose Judgment now of a long Time lingereth not, and their Damnation slumbereth not.* Of all the false Prophets, whose Marks I have endeavoured to point out to you, I caution and beseech you *chiefly* to beware of these, and *from such to turn away.*

7. Perhaps ye desire now to be informed whether it be right for you to hear any of those false Prophets alluded to in this Discourse? To this Query I answer, that in Justice, ye must hear every Man, before ye can form an Opinion or judge of his Doctrine; but in the Words of our Lord, I say unto you, *take heed how ye hear.* He cautioned his Disciples and Followers, indeed, to beware of the *Leaven of the Pharisees;* yet did not forbid to hear them; nay, he seems to allow them

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to hear, ſaying, *the Scribes and Phariſees ſit in the Seat of Moſes*, (the Seat of Inſtruction) *whatſoever they bid you do*, (he muſt mean, whatever they bid you do agreeable to the Law, and inforce therefrom) that *obſerve and do; but do not ye after their Works; for they ſay and do not.* Even ſo ſay I unto you, beware of the *Leaven*, the falſe Doctrine of our modern Phariſees, which tends to infect the Soul, as the Leaven ſpreads in Meal; but if they at any Time exhort you to *ceaſe to do evil, and learn to do well; to repent and turn from all your Tranſgreſſions, leſt Iniquity be your final Ruin*; be ſure ye obſerve this Exhortation.

Now I beſeech you to join with me in *praying the Lord of the Harveſt, that he would ſend forth more* truly enlightened and active *Labourers into his Harveſt*; that he would alſo open the Eyes of all *blind Leaders of the Blind*; that he would ſhew them that broad and dangerous Way in which they are walking themſelves, and encouraging others to perſevere; leſt they *both fall into the Ditch*, even that Pit, out of which there is no Return. May he enlighten their Underſtanding, diſpel the Clouds of Error, ſcatter the Miſts of Ignorance and Superſtition; and may a Ray of his Goſpel-Truth ſhine into their inmoſt Soul, and ſhine more and more to the perfect Day! May he rouze all thoſe who are faſt aſleep in Sin, careleſs and ſecure, *ſtupidly* ſecure, though they are juſt at the very Brink of the Precipice, within one Step of everlaſting Perdition! May that Voice which wakes the Dead, that Thunder which rends the Rocks, now pierce into, and melt down every flinty, hardened Heart; and may all Mankind ſoon feel, and *experimentally* know, that *Peace which paſſeth all Underſtanding*, which no human Language can ſufficiently expreſs! Amen.

October 4th, 1778.

FINIS.